

Easter Sunday 2008

Today is Easter Sunday. Today is the day of celebration in the House of God. Today is the day when Jesus rose from the dead. Today is the day of victory.

What joy is there if the victory is only ours? What joy is there if we haven't got anyone to share the victory with?

Joy, that's what today all is about. Joy. Enjoyment. God's complete fulfillment of all that he promised in the Old Testament. Great Joy in heaven.

The enemy is defeated. Death could not hold Jesus down. God raised him from the dead for us. For our freedom. Our salvation. **The heart of God is so uniquely intertwined in this day.**

So what we are doing about it? What are we doing about what we have? What are we doing about what we have received? What are we sharing with someone? Do we just share the chocolate? There has got to be more than this!

God has a first priority

John 3:16

"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:17 God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

The world population was around 120,000,000 at the time of Christ and stands at near 6000,000,000 today.

Two hundred thousand people have been converted to God between 1826 and 1834, (8yrs) 'Lectures On Revival', By Charles G Finney, Bethany House Publishers, 1988,

There is a Great Need - Unsaved Multitudes - A Lost World. By the time we arrive at church next week there will be 1 million more lost people in the world than when we left last Sunday.

About 320,000 people will die around the world in the next 24 hours. Most of them will not know Christ as Savior and Lord. That's about 228 per minute, about 4 people every second who are going to hell. A line made up of all the lost people in the world would circle the earth 30 times. This line grows at the rate of 20 miles per day. Every year the world population increases by over 240m. That's twice as fast as the death rate. 2 out of every 3 Christians accepted Christ before age of 18. On the positive side, about 100,000 are finding Christ as Savior every day. The world is

reverting to heathenism 30 times faster than it is being evangelized. Countless millions are still lost without Christ.

When George Whitfield was asked why he always preached 'You must be born again', he answered, 'Because, you must be born again'.

The highest purpose any one of us has in this life is to bring another person to Christ and that they become born again. The highest purpose the church has is to bring people to Christ so they are born again.

The Highest priority of God is for Salvation to come to this world.

The Ultimate meaning of Today.

So it is Easter. So we have eggs, celebrate the resurrection of Christ and smile heaps cause it is such a good day. Church there is a meaning a purpose behind today that is so easily lost in the materialism and post modernism of society. **Nothing we do has any meaning whatsoever unless we are leading people to Christ all the time.**

The criteria for whether a thing features in our church life at all is; does this result in bringing people into being born again.

Jesus said it over and over that his purpose in coming was to bring salvation to anyone and everyone who received him.

Matthew 11:28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

John 7:37

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

John 7:38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

Luke 19:10 For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

1 Timothy 1:15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

Matthew 9:13 For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

So many of Jesus parables were about salvation -

- ❖ The prodigal Son returning to the Father and the house.
- ❖ The great supper where the servants go to the highways and byways to compel people to come to the king's feast.
- ❖ The sower and the seed.
- ❖ The rich man and Lazarus.

His most severe rebukes were reserved for the religionists who made it virtually impossible for anyone to enter the Kingdom of God without adhering to all their traditions and man-made rules.

All of the Apostle's journeys after Christ was raised and the church was born were to travel the world with the message of Christ to bring people into a supernatural encounter with God where they were born again.

There are three elements to this event

- ❖ Receiving Christ through faith
- ❖ Repentance and cleansing
- ❖ Being filled with the Spirit – empowered to live the Christian life.
 - Empowered for service with gifts, anointing by the Holy Spirit.

Aligning ourselves with God's priority

Acts 2

When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples there was a reason!

When Peter stood up to speak there was a reason!

When the lame man at the gate beautiful was healed at the gate beautiful there was a reason.

When Paul and Silas were dramatically realized from the lowest dungeons there was a reason.

When Phillip went down to the city of Samaria there was a reason!

The ultimate meaning purpose of today is to display to the world the awesome, unequalled power of God. It is to bring the world to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

God wants the world saved. God wants the world in connection with Him. God wants the world to be reconciled to Him. That is what brings the ultimate freedom. The ultimate victory the ultimate truth.

Today is Easter Sunday. We are in the year of enlargement. My prayer for this church is that God would grant us a fresh passion for the lost. A fresh passion to share the truth we have in a relevant way to our generations.

Today we at C3 Marion embrace the first priority of God. To bring people to salvation. To bring people to true freedom.

JONAH

Jonah – meaning Dove, was the son of Amittai (meaning - truth telling). Only time a prophet ever sent to a heathen nation, which repented at the preaching of a stranger, whereas Israel failed to repent year after year, even though her national

prophets spoke again and again to them. Nineveh – residence of Nimrod (descendant of

Ham, Noah's son) (Gen 10:11) – Nimrod went into Assyria and built Nineveh

In the scripture, Jonah's is the only story of a prophet concealing his message. He

feared his reputation being tarnished if they repented and God changed his mind about destroying them.

Jonah attempts to flee from God, a pointless exercise, however, anyone attempting this

will find they pay the full price of the fare and still do not reach their destination.

Storms will always accompany those running from God.

Jonah 1:1

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

Jonah 1:2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their

wickedness has come up before Me."

There are many reasons for trouble in our lives. Sometimes God himself will try us as he

did Abraham. There is also a constant warfare with the devil. We ourselves cause our

own troubles most of the time. However, I'm sure some of the trouble we find ourselves

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in is because we are not aligning our priorities with God's. The highest priority God has

on his list is to get everyone in the world saved into his kingdom.

Jonah felt he had reasons strong enough to not just ignore the call of God to bring

Nineveh to Christ, he ran from God and the call to evangelize.

As long as I'm at the helm of this ship and of our movement the salvation of lost people

will be the highest priority. I realize there are many important areas that we can become engaged in, all from a deeply Christian heart. We can feel that we should lobby

government to change policies so disadvantaged people are helped. We can feel that

helping people with food and clothing is the highest we can do, to deliver people from

poverty. These are all extremely important but nothing, nothing is as important as the

salvation of a person's soul.

Jesus measures the wealth of the world against the soul and says of all the billions of

dollars of wealth and all the weight of military power, political power, fame and rewards

this world can offer, it still falls short of the value of one human soul.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think.

No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but

wants everyone to repent.

Jonah 1:5

Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the

cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten _

the load. But Jonah had gone down

into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

For these mariners to be afraid indicates this was an unusually strong one.

They felt

their skills were insufficient to handle the storm and so called on their gods.

Jonah is so unconcerned about anyone else, unbelievable self centered and preoccupied

with himself he simply got as far away from the sailors, the trouble he was causing, and

went to sleep.

It takes a heathen captain to stir Jonah to prayer. The world around us is crying out in

their silent screams, in their spirit, they cry out for someone to care enough to pray and

to cry out to God for them.

Jonah 1:9

So he said to them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?"

For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told

them.

Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?"—

for the sea was growing more tempestuous.

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And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become

calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me."

When we fail to obey God the trouble we find ourselves in includes others who are on

the same journey with us. For them to be delivered from the trouble, they need to be

delivered from us. There can be relationships we have in our life that we are holding

onto that are the reason for our trouble. We need to get out of the ship.

Sometimes

Jonah has to go!

Exactly the opposite is also true. When we are aligned with God, the blessing that falls

upon us will spread to others associated with us - Joseph, Abraham.

Jonah is such a reluctant witness that it takes these idol-worshipping heathens to drag it

out of him after they draw lots to discover why the storm is raging. He declares he fears

the Lord, yet not enough it appears, to obey him.

God uses the man's reluctant witness to bring a revival to the boat. After they

eventually throw the prophet overboard the storm ceased and they all made sacrifices

to the Lord and took vows to live right.

God is able to take our worst mistakes and make them good if we will simply come into

the light, acknowledge our mistake and commit to setting things right.

Getting our lives right can seem dangerous. Better to have a peaceful conscience and

suffer the consequences of coming into the light than to cheat justice with lies and try to

live with a guilty mind. The message we are given today is 'Don't get caught', rather than

'Do the right thing'. We must commit to being integrous rather than trying to live

without getting caught for our wrongs.

Jonah 1:17

Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly

of the fish three days and three nights.

God had anticipated this moment and was prepared for it. He is not the God of 'oops'.

Nothing surprises him. He had prepared a great fish. The moment he hit the water he

was swallowed up and for three days and three nights he remained in the belly of the

fish. This was a sign of what would happen to Christ. His death would be the salvation of

even those who have thrown him out.

Jonah 2:2 And he said:

"I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction,

And He answered me.

"Out of the belly of Sheol I cried,

And You heard my voice.

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What's it take to get us to pray? What does it take for God to get our attention? For

Jonah, only now does he start to cry out to God of his own volition.

However, it seems

as though it still took almost the entire three days before he did pray. The way this reads

is as though as soon as he prayed, God heard and spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah

onto the beach, not the ocean. To the sailors Jonah had confessed his God was the

creator of sea and dry land, elements that were on everyone's minds at the time.

Jonah 4:9

Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!"

Jonah feels righteous in being angered about the death of his comfort but was numb to

the pain of all the inhabitants of Nineveh and had no concern if they had all perished.

His own comfort was his concern at every turn of his life. He constantly had to be

dragged into obedience by God. Talking about God to others was extremely difficult for

him and so he had to be dragged into a witnessing situation by trouble. He has no joy in

seeing a city turn to Christ. He is only concerned about his own reputation. He is real

passion comes when his comfort is threatened.

This is God's contention with the prophet that he needs to align himself with God's priorities, which will mean the sacrificing of his own. Certainly God is interested in blessing his children, but we are being blessed so that we will be a blessing. God chides Jonah for being more concerned about his own comfort than for the Ninevites who have repented.

Mark 16:15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ... And these signs will follow those who believe...

Mark 16:20 And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.